

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM REFORM ACT OF 1995

SPEECH OF

HON. E. CLAY SHAW, JR.

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 18, 1995

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to voice my support for H.R. 260, the National Park System Reform Act of 1995. First, I would like to clear up any misconceptions about the nature of this bill. H.R. 260 does not close a single park. As a strong supporter of the preservation of native resources, I would never support a bill that threatened our national parks.

In the last 10 years, the National Park Service budget has more than doubled, increasing by more than 30 percent above the rate of inflation. Despite these substantial increases, the National Park Service claims that their agency is suffering huge funding shortages. In the past, when similar proposed budget cuts have been recommended, the NPS has responded by threatening to close highly visible areas. In the NPS budget request for fiscal year 1996 only 48 percent of the \$1.5 billion requested goes directly to fund park operations. In the remaining 52 percent of the budget, the administration has requested funding for projects such as \$1 million to repair the White House sidewalks. Clearly, NPS funding could afford to be cut in many areas with little or no effect on parks. In fact, the National Park Service has already submitted a report to Congress recommending specific programs that could be cut to meet the budget reductions, without closing parks.

Many ask why the National Park Service doesn't just increase its park entrance fees. Currently, the NPS collects fees at only one-third of the areas it administers, resulting in the failure of the NPS to collect \$60 million annually.

H.R. 260 is similar in scope to a bill which passed the House by a vote of 421 to 0 last Congress. It requires the NPS to develop the first plan in the history of the agency to define the mission of the agency. In addition, it requires that the NPS review the existing 368 areas managed by the agency—excluding the 54 national parks—to determine if all of them should continue to be managed by the NPS.

I quote directly from the bill, "Nothing in this Act shall be construed as modifying or terminating any unit of the National Park System without a subsequent Act of Congress." This bill is not designed to save money but to ensure that our park system continues to be the best in the world.

LEGISLATION AMENDING THE INTERNAL REVENUE CODE RELATING TO THE EXPIRATION DATE FOR REFUNDING OF EXCISE TAXES ON GASOLINE BLENDED WITH ETHANOL

HON. TIM JOHNSON

OF SOUTH DAKOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 19, 1995

Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to introduce legislation that would amend a technical error in the expiration date for refunds of excise tax on gasoline blended with alcohol fuels.

Although the exemption from the excise tax for alcohol fuels clearly does not expire until September 30, 2000, the provision in Internal Revenue Code allowing businesses who routinely blend alcohol with gasoline and other fuels expires on September 30, 1995. Businesses still qualify for refunds for the excise tax paid, but the expiration of the provision for routine refunding of the excise tax paid requires Herculean efforts on the part of blenders and likely will cause some to quit blending alcohol fuel altogether. Extending the refund to coincide with the expiration dates for the exemption from excise tax is fair and budget neutral, as businesses using this refund procedure clearly do not owe the tax.

Failing to extend the expiration of this refund will be negative for the environment, negative for the truly American industry of ethanol production, and negative for America's farmers as a significant market for grain will be reduced.

Mr. Speaker, I am certain that you and the rest of my colleagues would agree that it is good policy to fix technical errors in Internal Revenue Code. The alternative is the policy of unintended consequences. This serves no public interest. I ask you to join me in making this technical correction to the Federal Tax Code.

DENYING THE POOR EQUAL ACCESS TO THE LAW

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 19, 1995

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleagues to join me in opposing those who continue to scapegoat the poor for our Nation's ills, and now seek to kill the Legal Services Corporation which is often the only source of legal aid for those least able to pay or navigate their way through our system of justice. I wish to draw my colleagues attention to an honest, take-no-prisoners editorial in the San Francisco Chronicle which clearly demonstrates how utterly repugnant these proposals are to eliminate Federal funding for legal aid. I urge my colleagues to join me in protect-

ing this important and vital guarantor of justice in America.

[From the San Francisco Chronicle, Sept. 13, 1995]

DENYING THE POOR EQUAL ACCESS TO THE LAW

A repugnant attack on the poor gets a hearing on the floor of the U.S. Senate tomorrow with the scheduled vote on a bill that would slash funds for legal aid and eliminate the 30-year-old Legal Services Corporation.

The 323 shoestring community legal agencies funded by the corporation often provide the only recourse for members of the nation's underclass who are dealing with domestic violence emergencies, tenant problems, nursing home complaints, discrimination and wage disputes and myriad other plights requiring legal expertise.

But in the name of balancing the budget, the Senate Appropriations Committee passed a bill that would cut already-insufficient \$400 million funding by about half, abolish the corporation and make right-wing fundamentalists happy by imposing restrictions on the kinds of cases, such as divorce, that can be represented.

A similar and equally harmful and distasteful measure by Representative George Gekas, R-Pa., is making its way through the House.

The issue is "whether the government should be involved in breaking up families," was the know-nothing reaction of a spokesman for presidential hopeful Senator Phil Gramm when asked about the Texas Republican's support of the legal aid bills.

Typically, however, local legal aid lawyers working with limited funds must give priority to martial cases that involve spousal battering. They must often refer less urgent cases to others.

California received \$47.2 million this year to help the poor with civil legal matters, far from enough to provide legal aid to all the indigent, not least of all poverty-stricken elderly, who need such help. Proposed cuts for the state could total \$19 million.

Besides trying to use government-funded legal aid as a symbol of misplaced moral values, conservatives charge that the Legal Services Corporation spends too much time on high-profit class action suits.

To the contrary, most of the work of these dedicated, underpaid legal aid lawyers is spent on the gritty, routine case work involving families and housing, the disabled, patient rights, consumer and utility issues and wage issues. The legal and lawyers also help the poor wade through bureaucratic labyrinths that often make it difficult to collect the few federal benefits to which they are entitled.

The relatively small federal outlay in legal aid funds has meant the difference between justice and injustice for many poor Americans.

It is an investment that must continue to be honored if the country is not to abrogate its historic promise of equal access to the legal system.

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